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ACTION IIP-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 WHA-00 EAP-00 UTED-00 VC-00 TEDE-00  
INR-00 IO-00 LAB-01 VCE-00 AC-01 OIC-02 ACE-00  
SS-00 TEST-00 USIE-00 DRL-02 SAS-00 /006W  
-----86DBE7 161147Z /38

R 161131Z APR 02  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6773  
AMEMBASSY CARACAS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTIAGO 001011

STATE FOR IIP/G/WHA, INR/R/MR, WHA/BSC, WHA/PD, INR/IAA  
AMEMBASSY FOR PAO, IO

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: OPRC, KMDR, KPAO, CI  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: VENEZUELA

1. SUMMARY: FROM APRIL 13-15 SANTIAGO DAILIES RAN  
NUMEROUS ARTICLES, EDITORIALS, AND/OR POLITICAL ANALYSIS  
COLUMNS ON THE CRISIS IN VENEZUELA. HEADLINES AND  
EXCERPTS FOLLOW.

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ARTICLES  
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2. CONSERVATIVE, INFLUENTIAL, SANTIAGO NEWSPAPER-OF-  
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RECORD EL MERCURIO, ON APRIL 15: "THE GOVERNMENT OF  
CHILE EXPRESSED ITS HOPE THAT VENEZUELA WILL QUICKLY GO  
BACK TO INSTITUTIONAL NORMALCY AFTER RESTORING  
CONSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ."

3. LEADING-CIRCULATION, POPULAR, INDEPENDENT SANTIAGO  
DAILY LA TERCERA, ON APRIL 15: "FOREIGN MINISTER  
(ALVEAR) CALLS FOR FULL RESPECT OF THE CONSTITUTION IN  
VENEZUELA."

4. EL MERCURIO, APRIL 15: "CHILE CALLS FOR RESPECT OF  
INSTITUTIONS."

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS  
DATE/CASE ID: 12 APR 2005 200400109

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5. EL MERCURIO, APRIL 14: "PRESIDENT LAGOS SAID HE HOLDS HUGO CHAVEZ ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL COLLAPSE IN VENEZUELA: 'THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING (OF DEMONSTRATIONS IN CARACAS) DAMAGED DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS WITH A SUBSEQUENT HIGH COST IN HUMAN LIVES AND INJURIES, THEREBY VIOLATING THE INTER AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CHARTER.'"

6. LA TERCERA, APRIL 14: "THE CHIEF OF THE ARMY OUSTED HUGO CHAVEZ, AND IT WAS THE MILITARY THAT PUT HIM BACK IN. THE MILITARY HAVE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE GROWING INSTABILITY. AS IS TRUE FOR THE REST OF THAT COUNTRY'S CIVIL SOCIETY, THE MILITARY IS DIVIDED OVER LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHAVEZ."

7. LA TERCERA, APRIL 14: "WHY HUGO CHAVEZ MAKES THE WHITE HOUSE UNCOMFORTABLE."

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"WHAT HUGO CHAVEZ HAS IN COMMON WITH CASTRO, HUSSEIN AND GADDAFFI IS THAT HE IS ON THE LIST OF WASHINGTON'S PUBLIC ENEMIES... FOR THE UNITED STATES, VENEZUELA'S INSTABILITY, IN ADDITION TO THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WERE LEADING TO AN INCREASE IN OIL PRICES... BUSH IS CONCERNED THAT CHAVEZ MIGHT FOLLOW TEHERAN'S (SIC) EXAMPLE AND CUT OIL SUPPLIES TO SUPPORT THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE... THE WHITE HOUSE ALSO SEES WITH SPECIAL CONCERN DENUNCIATIONS ON ALLEGED TIES BETWEEN CHAVEZ AND COLOMBIA'S GUERRILLAS."

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EDITORIALS AND OPEDS  
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8. SANTIAGO'S LEADING FINANCIAL DAILY ESTRATEGIA ON APRIL 15 RAN AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "VENEZUELA'S CHALLENGE." BLOCK QUOTE FOLLOWS.

"...IT'S CRUCIAL TO ELIMINATE THOSE CORRUPT PRACTICES THAT PERMITTED CHAVEZ TO BE PUT IN OFFICE IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND WHICH ERODE THE COUNTRY'S INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS. THE RESPECT FOR RULE OF LAW, VALUES, AND PUBLIC ETHICS ARE ESSENTIAL TO BEGIN REBUILDING VENEZUELA."

9. CONSERVATIVE, INDEPENDENT SANTIAGO DAILY EL METROPOLITANO ON APRIL 15 RAN AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "LESSONS FROM VENEZUELA." BLOCK QUOTE FOLLOWS.

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"IN 48 HOURS VENEZUELA HAD THREE PRESIDENTS, AN  
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UNQUESTIONABLE INDICATOR THAT VENEZUELA IS BROKEN AND  
DIRECTIONLESS... DURING THOSE HOURS, THE LEADERS OF LATIN  
AMERICA DID NOT EXACTLY SHINE... THE RIO GROUP WAS SLOW  
IN RECOGNIZING THAT CHAVEZ WAS BEING OUSTED BY A MILITARY  
COUP, ENDORSED BY ECONOMIC POWERS AND A SOMEWHAT VISIBLE  
U.S. HAND... ONLY BATLLE, IN URUGUAY, AND DUHALDE, IN  
ARGENTINA, HAD THE COURAGE TO CALL THINGS BY THEIR NAME  
AND SAY THAT A DICTATORSHIP WAS FORMING IN VENEZUELA...  
ANOTHER ISSUE IS THE EXPLOSIVENESS OF THE MASSES, FOR  
THERE IS NO TRUE BELIEF IN DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA.  
MANY JUST SEE IT AS A WAY TO RULE, BUT NOT AS A WAY OF  
LIFE... PERHAPS WHAT IS DIFFERENT HERE ... IS THAT WHAT  
SURVIVED IN VENEZUELA WAS WHAT APPEARED TO BE MOST  
FRAGILE. IF THE MILITARY REACTED IN TIME, IT WAS BECAUSE  
SOMEONE REMINDED THEM THAT VENEZUELA HAS A CONSTITUTION.  
AMID THE CONFUSION, THEY HELD ONTO THE ONLY THING THEY  
HAD LEFT, AND THE BELL SAVED VENEZUELA. THIS TEACHES US  
THAT A LEGITIMATE MAGNA CARTA, RESULTING FROM THE SINCERE  
AND TOTAL CONSENSUS OF ITS PEOPLE, IS THE ONLY THING LEFT  
WHEN THE NAVIGATION MAP HAS BEEN LOST."

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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	WHA-00	EAP-00	UTED-00	VC-00	TEDE-00
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	SS-00	TEST-00	USIE-00	DRL-02	SAS-00	/006W	
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6774  
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10. CONSERVATIVE, AFTERNOON SANTIAGO DAILY LA SEGUNDA RAN ON APRIL 15 AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "VENEZUELA, A DIVIDED NATION." BLOCK QUOTE FOLLOWS.

"THE SUDDEN TURN OF EVENTS IN VENEZUELA SHOWS THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL DISSENT AMONG ITS CITIZENS... THE LESSON COULD BE USEFUL IF CHAVEZ KNOWS HOW TO USE IT. HIS CONCILIATORY REMARKS, WITH A CRUCIFIX IN HAND, SHOWS HE'S WILLING TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THOSE WHO OPPOSE

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HIM, BEGINNING WITH THE CHURCH, THAT SEEMS TO HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE EVENTS. IT'S FUNDAMENTAL FOR THE COUNTRY TO GO BACK TO NORMAL WITH REGARD TO DIFFERENCES... AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND TO SUBSTANTIALLY AMEND ITS GROWTH STRATEGY -- OF A POPULIST NATURE ... AND STOP CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES THAT WERE INCREASINGLY UNDEMOCRATIC."

11. CONSERVATIVE, INDEPENDENT SANTIAGO DAILY EL METROPOLITANO ON APRIL 14 RAN AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "CRISIS IN VENEZUELA." BLOCK QUOTE FOLLOWS.

"... CHAVEZ' COLLAPSE SEEMS TO BE A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY... CIVIL AND MILITARY SECTORS STILL SUPPORT HIM, BUT THIS SUPPORT IS NOT ENOUGH TO TURN THE PAGE... IT'S A CONFUSING PICTURE. ANOTHER LATIN AMERICAN PRESIDENT HAS FALLEN... IF THE PROBLEM WAS JUST HUGO CHAVEZ, NOW THE SHADOW OF CHAOS AND A LARGE-SCALE CONFRONTATION IS LURKING OVER VENEZUELA."

12. LEADING-CIRCULATION, POPULAR, INDEPENDENT SANTIAGO DAILY LA TERCERA RAN AN EDITORIAL ON APRIL 14 ENTITLED, "WHO WILL SAVE LATIN AMERICA." BLOCK QUOTE FOLLOWS.

"...AT THE LEVEL OF GOVERNANCE, THE REGRESSION IN LATIN AMERICA IS DRAMATIC. OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS FIVE PRESIDENTS IN THE REGION HAVE BEEN FORCED TO LEAVE OFFICE BEFORE THE CONCLUSION OF THEIR TERMS... WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM LATIN AMERICA FOR THIS DECADE? NOT A GOOD FUTURE IF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE REGION DON'T CHANGE THEIR POLICIES 180 DEGREES. THE REGION ISN'T NECESSARILY

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DOOMED TO GO THROUGH ANOTHER LOST DECADE, BUT SACRIFICES MUST BE MADE: A BALANCED FISCAL BUDGET, STRUCTURAL MARKET REFORMS... MODERN AND EFFICIENT STATES, AND POLITICAL

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CONFIDENCE IN AN OPEN AND COMPETITIVE ECONOMIC MODEL...  
IN SUM, GOVERNMENTS MUST NOT JUST OFFER DEMOCRACY, THEY  
MUST ALSO PROVIDE GOVERNANCE."

13. GOVERNMENT-OWNED, BUT EDITORIALY INDEPENDENT,  
SANTIAGO DAILY LA NACION RAN ON APRIL 14 AN OP-ED PIECE  
BY POLITICAL SCIENTIST MLADEN YOPO THAT CONCLUDES:

"... UNLIKE WHAT HAPPENED IN ARGENTINA WITH DE AL RUA,  
THE COUP IN VENEZUELA IS A DISGRACE BECAUSE IT SHOWS THE  
ABSENCE OF DEMOCRATIC MECHANISMS AND INSTITUTIONS TO  
RESOLVE ITS POLITICAL CRISIS AND LEANS ON THE ARMED  
FORCES AS A LAST RESORT REFEREE."

14. CONSERVATIVE, INDEPENDENT SANTIAGO DAILY EL  
METROPOLITANO RAN ON APRIL 13 AN EDITORIAL THAT STATES IN  
PART:

"...THE TECHNICAL TERM IS 'COUP D'ETAT,' BUT NO ONE WANTS  
TO USE IT... A NEW KIND OF OUSTING OF CONSTITUTIONAL  
PRESIDENTS SEEMS TO BE THE FAD IN LATIN AMERICA. THE  
FIRST VICTIM WAS MAHUAD IN ECUADOR... THE MODEL WAS  
CONTAGIOUS AND REACHED FUJIMORI IN PERU... AND BECAME AN  
EPIDEMIC IN ARGENTINA, WHERE THREE PRESIDENTS TOOK OFFICE  
IN A FEW DAYS... WITH SOME MINOR CHANGES, THE FORMULA  
REPEATS ITSELF: SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL UNREST, FOLLOWED WITH  
STRONG PRESSURE FROM THE MASSES, AND A MILITARY WITH  
EXPECTATIONS... LATIN AMERICA IS GOING THROUGH A PERIOD

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OF EXTREME INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS. PEOPLE THROW OUT  
THEIR LEADERS USING ONLY STREET DEMONSTRATIONS... IT'S  
OBVIOUS THAT THE DEMOCRATIC SENTIMENT IS NOT DEEPLY  
EMBEDDED. IT'S STILL VIEWED AS A WAY TO RESOLVE  
PROBLEMS, RATHER THAN A WAY OF LIFE. THERE IS NO TRULY  
DEMOCRATIC HEART (IN LATIN AMERICA)."

15. LA NACION ON APRIL 13 RAN AN EDITORIAL THAT STATES:  
"... THIS SHOWS HOW DIFFICULT IT HAS BEEN FOR POLITICAL  
AND ECONOMIC STABILITY TO TAKE ROOT IN OUR CONTINENT.  
THERE IS STILL FERTILE GROUND FOR REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC  
THAT OFFERS JUSTICE AND PROSPERITY AROUND THE CORNER. IN  
THE VENEZUELAN CASE, THIS IS PARTICULARLY SAD, BECAUSE IT  
HAS KNOWN ALL SORTS OF POPULISM AND YET HAS NOT FOUND THE  
RIGHT COMBINATION FOR GROWTH."

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